

LINDSAY PISTOL EXHIBIT
at the Cincinnati meeting May 21-22, 1955
By Sam Smith

From what we now know of the pistol making activities of James P. Lindsay, and it must be confessed that a great deal has been learned over what we thought was the final word back in 1940, it appears that the Lindsay pistol illustrated as part of an originally cased outfit at the bottom of Plate 1 is the First Model. Some collectors may question my calling it a "model" in view of the fact it is not serial numbered and no other pistol like it has thus far been found. However, it is so much different in size, construction and marking from any other Lindsay pistol that it seems to me it can be called a separate model.

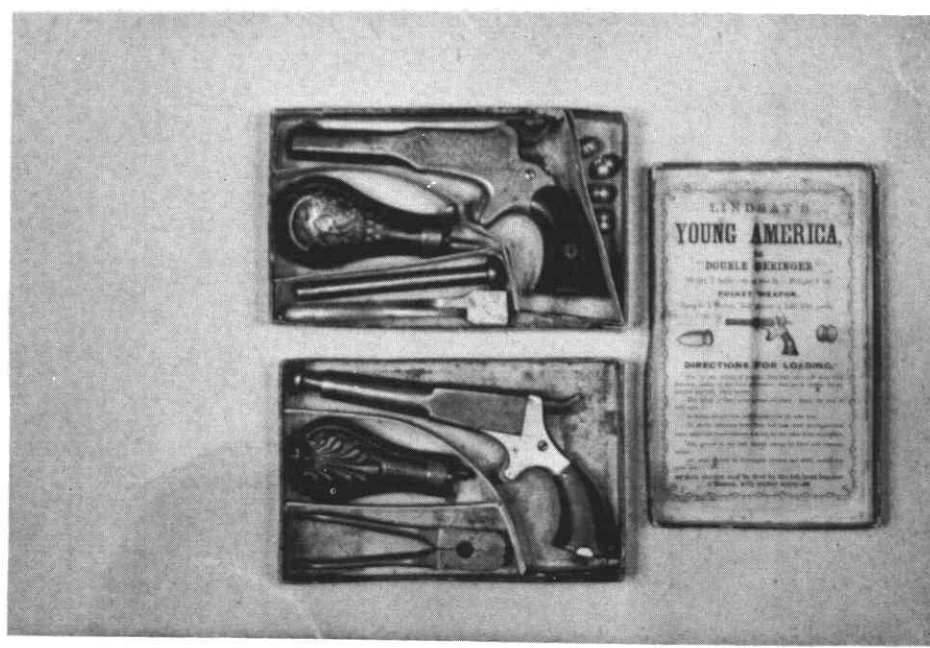


PLATE 1

Stamped on the left side of the iron barrel at the breech is "Lindsay's Young America" and on the right side it bears the proof of the Lindsay-Walch connection by being marked "Walch Fire Arms-Co. New-York." It is the only pistol known to be marked with both names, and its rarity indicates it may well have been a pre-production model. Being only 5 7/8 inches overall, it is the smallest of the Lindsay line. Another unusual feature found only on this model is the cross-strap method of holding the grips to frame at the butt --similar to the Sharps pepperboxes. The two triggers on this model precede the single trigger feature of the October 9, 1860 Lindsay patent.

These original Lindsay cardboard cases have a distinctive mottled cover and are, of course, excessively rare because of their fragile construction. Aside from the two in my own collection, I know of but four others existing today. Completing this cased First Model outfit is the steel loading tool, shown protruding from the barrel because there is room for it there and nowhere else in the compartments, an unmarked brass mould casting one banded bullet, and a lacquered brass flask. The 3 13/16 inch barrel is of .40 caliber, rifled, and made without a fore sight, but with a notch in the frame

between the hammers to act as a rear sight. Note how narrow the frame is in comparison with other Lindsay pistols.

Two slightly different examples of the Second Model Lindsay pistol are shown on Plate 2. The upper pistol illustrated has the barrel made in a twist-octagon form, in which the barrel flats do not run straight to the muzzle. Its serial number 145 appears underneath the barrel and the letter J is stamped on the frame under the grips. "Patent Apd. For" is stamped on the right flat of the barrel at the breech and the "Lindsay's Young America" marking appears on the top reading towards the muzzle. The .40 caliber rifled barrel is 4 7/8 inches long and it has a brass dovetailed fore sight but no rear sight. The brass frame shows a scroll engraving and is held to the barrel on the under side by one screw. This particular piece came out of the Justus M. Scrafford collection, a famous old Syracuse, New York collection that passed through Jim Serven's hands in 1940.



PLATE 2

Although it is apparent from studying the patent data, claims, and records that John Walch and James P. Lindsay were associated from the first in producing the Walch revolver and the Lindsay pistol, yet Walch's patent date was February 8, 1859, while Lindsay's was not until October 9, 1860. This does not necessarily mean that the double-loaded revolvers were produced prior to the double-loaded pistols, but it does indicate Walch was seeking legal protection earlier. When Lindsay's first application for a patent on his single trigger-two hammer mechanism was turned down, his lawyer mentioned in writing the Patent Office "all of the Walch pistols have been manufactured under the immediate care and inspection of Mr. Lindsay, and he says that the two separate sears were never applied to it until since he filed his present application...." From this, and from other quotations in my previous article, it is apparent that Walch and Lindsay were together in simultaneously manufacturing the two trigger Walch 12 shot .36 caliber revolvers and the two trigger Lindsay 1st and 2nd Model pocket pistols, and that the single trigger

invention was that of Mr. Lindsay. The subsequent 10 shot .31 Walch revolvers and the single trigger Lindsay pistols and rifles embodied his patent.

Thus we come to the original working model supplied the Patent Office by J. P. Lindsay and used by him to obtain his patent No. 30,332 on October 9th, 1860 for a "Lock for Firearms". Note in Plate 2 the original patent office tag, tied by the original red string! Both sides of the butt strap are stamped "Lindsay's".

This patent model was part of a huge collection of such models which Congress ordered sold in 1925. They had been in private storage since 1908 and the mounting cost was meeting with disapproval. Even as far back as 1925, Government Officialdom (Official-dumb) was less concerned with preserving models of inventions that had helped to make America great, and more concerned with finding space to store carbon copies of carbon copies. Fortunately it found a good home, back at last among former associates from Naugatuck. It is a working model of course, with frame cut away on left side to show interior and with the breech NOT cut for barrel inletting.

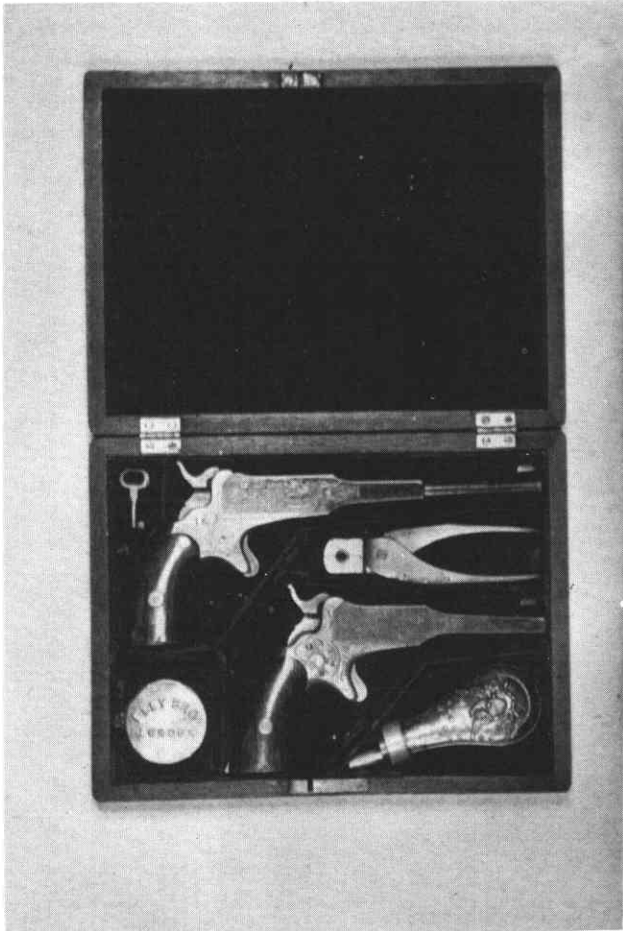


PLATE 3

The Third Model Lindsay Pocket Pistol, which we used to call the 2nd model, is illustrated on Plate 3 by two specimens complete with accessories in a wood case. The upper pistol in the case is another "only specimen" and is stamped on the right and left sides of the barrel "Lindsay's Young-America Man'f'd by J. P. Lindsay Man'fg. Co. New-York". It is the only known Third Model with a six inch barrel. The pistol is serial number 136 and in addition to the often found Stag & Dog engraving on the brass frame, a farm scene and house appears behind the stag, there is more grass at the feet of the dog, and a scroll engraving outlines the barrel breech and also appears on the back-strap. This was quite evidently a deluxe job with its extra engraving and long barrel. The standard Third Model Lindsay pistol in the case has the floral engraving on the frame and bears the customary Lindsay marking on the right side of the barrel and the lion, eagle and coat of arms engraving on the left. Also in

the wood case is the original mould marked on each side "Lindsay's Young America", a small flask with the Stars, Eagle and E Pluribus Unum design and stamped "Lindsay's Young America" on the neck, and a box of Eley Bros. caps.

The cased Third Model illustrated as the upper set on Plate 1 shows the standard cardboard casing for this model. The pistol is serial number 381. Serial numbers on this model go up to 1242; a fairly accurate estimate of the number made and it is the most common of the Lindsay pistols. So few marked Lindsay moulds and flasks have been found, as compared with the number of pistols, as to make it doubtful if all pistols were sold in boxes complete with accessories. The inside cover of this cardboard box is shown at the right and gives the interesting directions for loading the "Double Deringer". Not all cases had the directions pasted inside, though they may have been included on a separate sheet of paper that has since been lost.

The first time I saw this interesting and original cased set with pistol number 381 was on October 18th, 1940 when I visited the owner of a fine collection. The set included a marked Lindsay flask at that time. When Nick Harrison viewed this same collection four years later, he made notes on the Lindsay pistols for me and included mention of the original Lindsay marked flask, in the case with pistol number 381. However the owner passed away and when I came to buy this set from a dealer a few years later, one of those "flask pirates" had raided the set and made off with the marked flask. Substituted was an identical, but unmarked, flask which is presently in the box. Though they may not realize it, the activity of some of these "flask pirates" is fairly well known in robbing cased sets to build up their flask collections, or in exchanging nozzles or spouts to create variations. To me, this is little better than replacing locks on U. S. martial pistols to make rarities (putting Starr or Deringer rifle locks, sometimes with altered dates, on model 1816 North pistols).

Recent investigation by two fellow collectors, Donald S. Tuttle and C. S. Ham, has brought to light that the Lindsay pistols were made at the plant of the Union Knife Company on Fulling Mill Brook in Naugatuck, Conn. Back in 1940 it was surmised that the Lindsay pistols were made in New Haven (actually only the 1,000 Lindsay double-muskets were) and it wasn't until 1950 with the publication of an original broadside supplied by John S. du Mont that the correct city of manufacture was learned. The Union Knife Company was organized in 1851 with Enos Hopkins and John A. Peck as leaders in the enterprise. The latter eventually secured control of the stock and became president. Here the pistols were made under the direct supervision of James Lindsay. Back in the 1870's, financial arrangements were not as simple as we bankers like to believe they were, and family tradition tells of Mr. Peck carrying large sums of cash when traveling on periodic purchasing trips to New York City. It is only natural that he carried a pistol which had been the product of his company a few years before. Lindsay pocket model #678 was the protection. There is no record of its being used, and after his death about 1900, his widow gave it to the local chief of police and he to the father of Mr. C. S. Ham.

After the manufacture of the Lindsay pistols and the Walch revolvers ceased to be profitable, the Union Knife Company continued the manufacture of camp knives, forks, spoons and army knives, etc., until the factory burned down in 1885. Mr. Lindsay drifted from firearms to a connection with Homer Twitchell & Son, located a quarter of a mile lower on the brook, where safety pins were made under Lindsay's patent on the wire safety pin and also the automatic machinery which made them.



PLATE 4

Three of the so-called Army Model pistols are shown on plate 4, with the two at the left being regular models and the one at the right being another "only specimen." This one has the frame cut away to show how the single trigger mechanism works and could have been a factory demonstrator, a salesman's sample, or perhaps was made in a vain effort to secure a government contract. In addition to the cut-away feature, it is cut for stock, bears no serial number, is marked with both the Walch February 8, 1859 and Lindsay October 9, 1860 patent dates, and is caliber .54 which would have been more attractive in being considered by the military. The regular Army Models have the "Lindsay's Young America Patent'd Oct. 9, 1860" marking in three lines on top the barrel at the breech, and are .44 caliber smoothbore. They have uniformly low serial numbers which indicate only about 114 were made. All are made with trigger guards for the single trigger. A few specimens have rifled barrels and one has no marking except the serial.

Time, research, and the finding of a few additional specimens has increased our knowledge of the Lindsay product. In 1940 was presented for the first time the basic models and a serial number-based estimate of production--without factory records, the best method we have at this late date. By 1950 a fairly complete story was written that gave the proof that the Lindsay and Walch firearms were made by the same firm in Naugatuck, Conn. Now, in 1955, comes evidence that the arms were actually manufactured under Lindsay's supervision by the Union Knife Company on Fulling Mill Brook in Naugatuck. It would now appear that there is little left to tell, but another five or ten years may reveal even more. Such is part of the thrill of collecting!